



NEWS

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Air District Using Stricter Standard for Air Pollution Forecasts

More *Spare the Air Tonight* Advisories Expected This Winter

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) is using a new, more stringent federal particulate standard, Particulate Matter, PM 2.5, in daily air quality forecasts. The new federal standard was adopted due to health risks caused by microscopic particles of 2.5 microns or smaller that can lodge deep in the lungs and cause respiratory and other related diseases. A micron is about 25 times smaller than the size of a human hair. The previous particulate standard was based on PM 10 or particles seven times smaller than a human hair.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) has set a 24-hour average PM 2.5 concentration of 65 micro grams per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) as the point at which air quality becomes unhealthy for the general public. This standard equates to 149 on the Air Quality Index (AQI) and is the new trigger for the Air District to issue a *Spare the Air Tonight* advisory this winter.

The Air District's *Spare the Air Tonight* Program issues an advisory to the public mid-morning when air quality is predicted to be unhealthy that evening. The advisory also asks that individuals not burn wood and limit driving on those nights. Wood burning and vehicle exhaust are the major sources of particulate pollution in the winter.

"The worst kind of air pollution is created by burning wood," according to Air District CEO William C. Norton. "Evidence is mounting on the health dangers of exposure to tiny particles in wood smoke, so we are asking the public to break the wood burning habit, especially during a *Spare the Air Tonight* advisory, for the sake of the health of people inside their homes and outside in their neighborhoods," Norton added.

Winter meteorology plays a role in air pollution. Unlike summer smog that peaks in the late afternoon, winter PM 2.5 pollution is most concentrated at night and in the early morning hours. On winter evenings, cold air sinks close to the ground with a layer of warmer air above. When there is no wind to dissipate pollutants, they are trapped under this lid of warm air and can build up rapidly to unhealthy levels. During late November through the end of January the angle of the sun is so shallow that the earth does not radiate enough heat in the early morning hours to lift the inversion layer—therefore particulate pollution does not decline until mid-morning.

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For more information visit: www.sparetheair.org or call 1-800-HelpAir for a free Woodburning Handbook.